



## Chelonian type specimens at the Oxford University Museum

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### Abstract

In the present paper, the history of the chelonian collection of the Oxford University Museum is summarized and extant type specimens are identified. Currently, there are 46 name-bearing types of 25 chelonian taxa and paralectotypes of three taxa described by Georg Baur, Thomas Bell, André Marie Constant Duméril & Gabriel Bibron, and John Edward Gray from the families Emydidae, Geoemydidae, Testudinidae, Chelidae, and Pelomedusidae. Among the name-bearing types, there are holotypes of eight taxa (*Cyclemys bellii* Gray, 1863; *Emys speciosa* var. *levigata* Gray, 1831; *Phrynops bellii* Gray, 1844; *Rhinoclemys bellii* Gray, 1863; *Sternotherus leachianus* Bell, 1825; *Sternotherus trifasciatus* Bell, 1825; *Testudo hercules* var. *truncata* Gray, 1831; *Testudo tentoria* Bell, 1828) and one lectotype is of *Pyxis arachnoides* Bell, 1827. Two additional holotypes or syntypes are of *Terrapene maculata* Bell, 1825 and *Terrapene nebulosa* Bell, 1825, and 35 syntypes represent 14 taxa (*Cyclemys orbiculata* Bell, 1834; *Emys concentrica* var. *polita* Gray, 1831; *Emys crassicollis* Gray, 1831; *Emys decussata* Gray, 1831; *Emys hamiltonii* Gray, 1831; *Emys irrigata* Duméril & Bibron, 1835; *Emys speciosa* Gray, 1831; *Emys spinosa* Gray, 1831; *Emys tectum* Gray, 1830; *Emys thurjii* Gray, 1831; *Kinixys castanea* Bell, 1827; *Kinixys homeana* Bell, 1827; *Testudo actinodes* Bell, 1828; *Testudo guntheri* Baur, 1889). Three paralectotypes are of *Emys dentata* Gray, 1831, eight paralectotypes are of *Emys vulgaris* Gray, 1831, and one paralectotype is of *Pyxis arachnoides* Bell, 1827. Except the syntype of *Testudo guntheri* Baur, 1889, originating from the college of Christ Church, Oxford, all type specimens belong to the former collection of Thomas Bell that was transferred to Oxford in 1862. *Testudo guntheri* Baur, 1889 is regarded as *nomen dubium* because it was based on specimens without locality data.

**Key words:** Chelonians, herpetology, Thomas Bell, type specimens

### Introduction

The Oxford University Museum houses a type-rich chelonian collection. Nearly all of the type specimens are part of the former private collection of one of the most influential 19<sup>th</sup> Century scholars working on the diversity of chelonians, Thomas Bell (1792–1880). Besides type specimens of species described by Bell, this collection was mainly used by John Edward Gray (1800–1875) as source for the description of several new chelonian species, in part based on manuscript names of Bell (Gray 1830–1835, 1831a, b, 1844, 1863a, b). Also Duméril & Bibron (1835) described a terrapin species, *Emys irrigata*, based on a manuscript name by Bell, of which the original specimens were in his collection. The major part of Bell's collection arrived in the Oxford University Museum in 1862 as a present by Reverend F. W. Hope who had earlier purchased the collection from Bell. In the following, we review the history of this historically important collection and give an account of the identified type specimens present in Oxford. Besides Bell's specimens, the Oxford University Museums also received chelonian specimens from other collectors and donors as well as from the Ashmolean Museum and the Anatomical Museum of Christ Church, Oxford. Amongst the Christ Church specimens, there is a shell with an articulated skeleton of a Galapagos tortoise that served as syntype of *Testudo guntheri* Baur, 1889. It constitutes the only chelonian type in Oxford that originates not from the Bell Collection. Interestingly, Günther (1877: p. 63) claims that this specimen was “*purchased of a dealer in Paris*